United Nations CEDAW/C/BRB/CO/5-8

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the combined fifth to eighth periodic reports of Barbados*

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth to eighth periodic reports of Barbados (CEDAW/C/BRB/5-8) at its 1514th and 1515th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1514 and 1515), held on 12 July 2017. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/BRB/Q/5-8 and the responses of Barbados are contained in CEDAW/C/BRB/Q/5-8/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its combined fifth to eighth periodic reports. It also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group, albeit submitted with a considerable delay, and welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue, while noting that some questions were left unanswered.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by the Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development, Steven Blackett, and included representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the National Advisory Council on Gender and the Permanent Mission of Barbados to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2002 of the State party's fourth periodic report (CEDAW/C/BRB/4) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) (Amendment) Act, in 2016;

(b) Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, in 2016;

(c) Trafficking in Persons Prevention Act, in 2016;

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-seventh session (3-21 July 2017).

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(d) Family Law (Amendment) Act, in 2014;

(e) Maintenance (Amendment) Act, allowing any parent to make an application for child maintenance, in 2014;

(f) Employment Rights Act, providing for special consideration of the safety and health of pregnant women, in 2012;

(g) Safety and Health at Work Act, in 2005.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and advancing women's rights, including the adoption or the establishment of the following:

(a) National youth policy, in 2012;

(b) National HIV/AIDS policy, in 2008;

(c) Establishment of the Bureau of Social Policy, Research and Planning, in 2007.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2013.

7. The Committee notes with satisfaction the engagement of the State party to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and the establishment of a new mechanism to reach those new objectives. The Committee recalls the importance of indicator 5.1.1 of the Goals and commends the positive efforts of the State party to implement sustainable development policies, including measures to combat climate change.

C. Parliament

8. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites Parliament, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.**

D. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Legal status of the Convention and ratification of the Optional Protocol

9. The Committee is concerned that, although the State party ratified the Convention in 1980 without reservations, the Convention has still not been fully incorporated into domestic law and, as a result, its provisions have not been directly invoked or applied in domestic courts. The Committee is also concerned that the State party's Office of the Attorney General advised against ratifying the Optional Protocol, given that ratification would require the establishment of additional mechanisms in order to comply with obligations under the Optional Protocol.

10. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Fully incorporate the provisions of the Convention into its domestic law;**

(b) **Ensure that the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations are well known and applied by all branches of the Government, including the judiciary, as a framework for laws, court decisions and policies on gender equality and the advancement of women;**

(c) **Ratify the Optional Protocol and train the judiciary, legal professionals and law enforcement officers on the Committee's jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol.**

Constitutional and legislative protection of women from discrimination

11. The Committee remains concerned about the absence in the State party's legislation of a definition of discrimination against women in line with the Convention. It is further concerned about the lack of understanding by the State party of the concept of substantive equality and that there is no law on gender equality or comprehensive anti-discriminatory legislation that would incorporate the principle of equality of women and men and define and prohibit all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender, including direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, in line with article 1 of the Convention. The Committee is particularly concerned that article 23, subsection 1 (b), of the Constitution does not prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex and that article 23, subsection 3 (b), does not protect women against discrimination with respect to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property upon death and other matters of personal law.

12. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and its general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention:**

(a) **Expand the constitutional protection against discrimination to include at least the grounds of sex and gender;**

(b) **Adopt, without delay, a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women in national legislation, covering all prohibited grounds of discrimination and encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and private spheres and intersecting forms of discrimination against women;**

(c) **Provide capacity-building to all relevant State officials and policymakers and ensure a thorough understanding of the concept of substantive equality, in line with the Convention and the Committee's jurisprudence;**

(d) **Ensure the effective prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex or gender through appropriate enforcement mechanisms and sanctions.**

Access to justice

13. The Committee notes with appreciation the involvement of the State party with other countries of the region in a project to improve access to justice, in particular for women. It also notes that the State party is planning to establish a family court that will have island-wide jurisdiction to hear matters related to family arrangements at the magisterial and High Court levels. However, the Committee notes the following with concern:

(a) The insufficient resources allocated by the State party to its justice system, the overly burdensome procedural rules, considerable backlogs and lengthy delays in processing cases, the limited capacity of the police and courts to address

complaints from women about gender-based violence in a gender-sensitive manner and the absence of a specialized court on family law;

(b) That women in the State party, especially those belonging to disadvantaged groups, are unaware of their rights under the Convention and thus lack the information necessary to claim them.

14. **The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Reform and strengthen the judicial system, including through the allocation of sufficient human, technical and financial resources and systematic capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and other law enforcement officials on women's rights and gender equality, and raise awareness to eliminate the stigmatization faced by women who claim their rights;**

(b) **Give priority to the establishment of courts specializing in family law and ensure that the police and courts address complaints from women about gender-based violence in an expeditious, efficient and gender-sensitive manner;**

(c) **Enhance awareness among women of their rights and the remedies available to them under the Convention through awareness-raising campaigns and other measures, in cooperation with civil society organizations and community-based women's associations.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

15. The Committee remains concerned about the limited human, technical and financial resources allocated to the Bureau of Gender Affairs and about the limited capacity of the State party's national machinery to adequately ensure the coordination of gender mainstreaming in all areas and at all levels. The Committee is also concerned about the delay in finalizing and adopting the national policy on gender. It is further concerned about the lack of data disaggregated by sex, which is necessary to assess the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes that are planned or in place to enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights.

16. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt a clear strategy to consolidate and reinforce the national and local capacity of the national machinery for the advancement of women, including the Bureau of Gender Affairs, and ensure that it has adequate decision-making power and human, technical and financial resources to effectively implement the Convention;**

(b) **Ensure effective coordination and develop a gender mainstreaming strategy that includes gender-responsive budgeting and that can be applied in all policies and programmes at all levels to address various aspects of women's lives;**

(c) **Finalize and accelerate the adoption of the national policy on gender and include specific indicators and targets in the policy;**

(d) **Ensure that it develop policies and programmes within its national machinery, with the assistance of the gender studies department at the University of the West Indies, with the aim of achieving gender equality in a comprehensive and effective manner and within a human rights framework and improve the collection of data disaggregated by sex to assess the impact and effectiveness of those policies and programmes.**

National human rights institutions

17. The Committee notes the role of the Office of Ombudsman and the establishment of a standing National Human Rights Coordinating Committee to evaluate that role and the possible need to establish a separate institution, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles). However, the Committee is concerned at the current absence of an independent national human rights institution in the State party.

18. **The Committee recommends that the Office of the Ombudsman incorporate a gender perspective into its work. The Committee further recommends that the State party establish an independent national human rights institution, in accordance with the Paris Principles, with a mandate to promote and protect women's rights.**

Temporary special measures

19. The Committee is concerned at the absence of a comprehensive strategy for adopting and implementing temporary special measures to achieve substantive equality of women and men in the State party in all areas of the Convention where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, including political and public life, education, employment and health.

20. **In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and recalling its general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Develop a comprehensive strategy for adopting and implementing temporary special measures to achieve substantive equality of women and men in the State party;**

(b) **Provide capacity-building to all relevant State officials and policymakers and to political parties, in particular on the concept of temporary special measures and their adoption and implementation, including time-bound goals and quotas, directed at achieving substantive equality of women and men in all areas in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, including in political and public life, education, employment and health.**

Stereotypes

21. The Committee remains concerned at the persistence of deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which perpetuate the subordination of women in the family and in society, which is reflected in the educational and professional choices of women, their limited participation in political and public life and in the labour market and their unequal status in family relations. The Committee recalls that such discriminatory stereotypes are also root causes of gender-based violence against women and notes with concern that the State party has not yet taken sustained measures to modify or eliminate discriminatory stereotypes.

22. **The Committee reminds the State party that high-level public officials must take a leadership role in the elimination of patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory stereotypes and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Put into place, without delay, a comprehensive strategy, with proactive and sustained measures targeting women and men at all levels of society, to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes**

concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society;

(b) **Use innovative measures targeting political leaders, the media, teachers, employers, trade unions, health professionals and the general public, to strengthen understanding of the substantive equality of women and men and to enhance positive and non-stereotypical portrayals of women.**

Gender-based violence against women

23. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party to combat gender-based violence against women, including the establishment of the Family Conflict Intervention Unit in 2013. However, it remains concerned at the high prevalence of gender-based violence against women, in particular domestic and sexual violence, which remain culturally accepted and underreported, the lack of statistical data disaggregated by age and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and the lack of shelters for women who are victims of gender-based violence. The Committee is also concerned at reports of the increasing rate of femicide in the State party.

24. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women and general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Accord high priority to the full implementation of the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) (Amendment) Act and the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act and ensure that perpetrators of gender-based violence are prosecuted and adequately punished;**

(b) **Specifically criminalize femicide and ensure that cases of femicide are effectively investigated and prosecuted and that the sentences imposed on perpetrators are commensurate with the gravity of the crime;**

(c) **Provide mandatory capacity-building programmes for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and other law enforcement officials on the strict application of legislation criminalizing gender-based violence against women and on gender-sensitive investigation methods and procedures to employ with victims of such violence;**

(d) **Provide adequate redress, assistance and protection to women who are victims of gender-based violence by establishing shelters, issuing and enforcing protection orders and enhancing cooperation with non-governmental organizations that provide assistance and rehabilitation to victims;**

(e) **Collect statistical data on domestic, sexual and other forms of gender-based violence against women, disaggregated by age and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

25. The Committee notes with appreciation the establishment in the Royal Barbados Police Force of a special unit on trafficking, in 2013. However, it regrets the failure of the State party to respond to questions raised during the dialogue. The Committee notes with concern that the State party remains both a source and a destination country for women and girls, including non-nationals, who are subjected to trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, as a result of high unemployment, increasing levels of poverty and the weak implementation of anti-trafficking legislation. The Committee is particularly concerned about:

(a) The delay in the adoption of the national policy on trafficking and the policy and procedures manual for the protection of victims of trafficking, under discussion since 2008;

(b) The lack of information on the number of complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions related to the trafficking of women and girls, as well as on the support and rehabilitation services and specialized shelters available to victims;

(c) Reports of discrimination and gender-based violence against women in prostitution, which result in various forms of abuse, the limited assistance available to victims, and the absence of exit and reintegration programmes for women who wish to leave prostitution.

26. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strictly enforce its legislation on trafficking in persons, increase the financial resources allocated to the implementation of laws and programmes to combat trafficking and expedite the adoption of the national policy on trafficking and the policy and procedures manual for the protection of victims of trafficking;**

(b) **Build the capacity of the judiciary, law enforcement officers, border police, social workers and health-care professionals on the early referral of victims of trafficking, including non-nationals, to appropriate social services and gender-sensitive protocols for their treatment;**

(c) **Address the root causes of trafficking by enhancing educational and economic opportunities for women and girls and their families, thereby reducing their vulnerability to exploitation by traffickers;**

(d) **Intensify efforts aimed at bilateral, regional and international cooperation to prevent trafficking, including through information exchange and harmonization of procedures to prosecute traffickers;**

(e) **Establish sufficiently funded and equipped shelters and crisis centres for women who are victims and provide reintegration programmes and alternative income-generating opportunities for women who are victims of trafficking and exit programmes for women who wish to leave prostitution.**

Participation in political and public life

27. The Committee notes with appreciation that the two major political parties have made concerted efforts to increase the representation of women. It is concerned, however, that women remain significantly underrepresented at the decision-making level in Parliament, in the Government and in the diplomatic service, owing to patriarchal attitudes, a lack of effective measures such as statutory quotas or a parity system for political appointments, limited access to political networks and insufficient capacity-building for women on political leadership skills.

28. **The Committee reminds the State party that the full, equal, free and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life is a requirement for the full implementation of the human rights of women and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt a comprehensive strategy based on targeted measures, including training, gender-sensitive recruitment, a parity system to ensure that women are appointed to decision-making positions at both the national and local levels, on an equal footing with men, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life;**

(b) **Conduct awareness-raising activities for politicians, community leaders, the media and the general public on the importance of the participation of women in decision-making, in order to enhance understanding that the full, free and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life is a requirement for the effective implementation of the Convention and the political stability and economic development of the country;**

(c) **Increase the participation of women in political and public life at all levels, including through the adoption of statutory quotas, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25;**

(d) **Build the capacity of, and enhance access to campaign financing for, women candidates to enable them to compete effectively with their male counterparts.**

Nationality

29. The Committee remains concerned that, some provisions on nationality in the State party's legislation notwithstanding, although such rights are possessed by Barbadian men, there are no constitutional rights for Barbadian women with regard to the following:

(a) The transfer of nationality to a child born outside of the State party to a Barbadian woman who was not born in Barbados;

(b) The right of Barbadian women to transfer their nationality to their foreign husbands.

30. **The Committee recommends that the State party amend its Constitution to grant Barbadian women equal rights with men regarding the transmission of their nationality to their children or to their spouses of foreign nationality, in line with article 9 of the Convention.**

Education

31. The Committee notes with appreciation the high literacy rate among women. It also welcomes the achievement of gender parity at the primary and secondary levels of education, as indicated in the report entitled "Barbados: Education for All 2015 National Review". Nevertheless, the Committee notes the following with concern:

(a) The high school drop-out rate among adolescent girls at the secondary level of education, which is often owing to early pregnancy, the absence of a written policy on pregnant students in schools, the compulsory expulsion of pregnant girls from schools after five months of pregnancy, which reinforces negative stereotypes, and the lack of measures taken to ensure their re-entry and retention in school following childbirth;

(b) The fact that, notwithstanding the information provided by the State party's delegation on the ongoing initiatives of the Ministry of Education to end corporal punishment in schools, as well as its cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund, since 2010, on the positive behaviour management programme in schools, corporal punishment is culturally accepted and widely practised in schools;

(c) The concentration of women and girls in traditionally female-dominated fields of study and their underrepresentation in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics;

(d) The lack of information on education for women and girls with special needs.

32. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt a written policy to ensure that pregnant women and girls may remain at school after the fifth month of pregnancy and that young mothers can return to school following childbirth;**

(b) **Explicitly prohibit corporal punishment at school, ensure that the prohibition of corporal punishment is adequately monitored and enforced and strengthen teacher training and practice on positive discipline;**

(c) **Eliminate negative stereotypes and structural barriers to the enrolment of girls in non-traditional fields of education such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics and provide career counselling for girls and boys on non-traditional career paths;**

(d) **Ensure access to mainstream education for women and girls with special needs.**

Employment

33. The Committee notes the adoption of the Employment Rights Act in 2012. Nevertheless, it notes the following with concern:

(a) The disproportionately high unemployment rate among women and the persistently wide and increasing gender pay gap in all sectors, continued occupational segregation in the labour market and the concentration of women in low-wage jobs in the formal and informal sectors;

(b) The lack of information on the implementation of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;

(c) The delay in the adoption of the Sexual Harassment (Prevention) bill.

34. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Intensify its efforts to create an enabling environment for women to become economically independent, including by raising awareness among employers and trade unions in the public and private sectors about the prohibition of employment discrimination against women and promote the entry of women into the formal economy, including through the provision of vocational and technical training;**

(b) **Effectively enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, adopt measures to narrow and close the gender pay gap, regularly review wages in sectors in which women are concentrated and provide statistical data on wages in both the public and private sectors, disaggregated by sex;**

(c) **Expedite the adoption of the Sexual Harassment (Prevention) bill.**

Health

35. The Committee notes with concern that the austerity measures taken by the State party have had negative effects on women's access to health services. It is also concerned about the following:

(a) The lack of age-appropriate and comprehensive education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including on responsible sexual behaviour, the lack of family planning services and the high level of unmet contraception needs among women and girls;

(b) The limited information available to lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and girls on sexual and reproductive health and rights and the insufficient training of medical personnel on the special needs of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(c) The lack of information on the prevalence of cervical and breast cancer in the State party and on the treatment available to women and girls;

(d) The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women in the State party.

36. **In line with its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, the Committee calls upon the State party:**

(a) **To ensure that the health sector receives appropriate budget allocations and improve women's access to high-quality health care;**

(b) **To intensify age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights in schools and the dissemination of information on family planning and available, accessible and affordable contraceptive methods in order to reduce the number of unwanted and early pregnancies;**

(c) **To improve access to information on sexual and reproductive health and rights for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and girls and train medical personnel to respond to their specific health needs;**

(d) **To collect disaggregated data on the prevalence of cervical and breast cancer in the State party and provide training to medical and health professionals on the early detection of those diseases, including in rural areas;**

(e) **To intensify the implementation of strategies to combat HIV/AIDS, in particular preventive strategies, and continue to provide free antiretroviral treatment to all women and girls with HIV/AIDS.**

Economic empowerment of women

37. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to combat poverty through the poverty alleviation and reduction programme and the identification, stabilization, enablement and empowerment programme. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that austerity measures, including budget cuts in order to reduce debt, have had a significant impact on social programmes and that the regressive Value Added Tax and National Social Responsibility Tax have disproportionally affected women. It is particularly concerned with regard to the following:

(a) The State party's financial secrecy policies and rules on corporate reporting and taxation having a potentially negative impact on the ability of other States, in particular those already short of revenue, to mobilize the maximum available resources for the fulfilment of women's rights;

(b) The high prevalence of poverty in women-headed households and the lack of information on the concrete impact of social programmes to improve the economic situation of women in rural and urban areas;

(c) The lack of information on loan schemes, mortgages and other forms of financial credit for women and the provision of specific training on women's entrepreneurship.

38. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Undertake the studies and evaluations necessary to monitor the gender-specific effects of the austerity measures and ensure an internal redistribution of its domestic resources in order to overcome the consequences of budget cuts, giving priority to measures which support gender equality in all**

fields and devise an effective strategy to ensure the full implementation of the Convention;

(b) Undertake independent, participatory and periodic impact assessments of the extraterritorial effects of its financial secrecy and corporate tax policies on women's rights and the substantive equality of women and men, ensuring that such assessments are conducted impartially and with public disclosure of the methodology and findings;

(c) Continue to strengthen its programmes to combat the feminization of poverty, in particular among women-headed households;

(d) Address barriers to women's entrepreneurship by devising specific programmes and developing evaluation mechanisms;

(e) Design specific interventions to leverage opportunities for the economic empowerment of women and ensure that they are involved in the design of those strategies and programmes, focusing on women not only as victims or beneficiaries but also as active participants in the formulation and implementation of such policies.

Rural women

39. The Committee notes the activities undertaken by the State party's Rural Development Commission. Nevertheless, it is concerned at the disadvantaged status of women in rural areas and regrets the limited data on their situation and on the measures taken by the State party to address poverty among rural women and to fully ensure their access to justice, education, formal employment, skills development and training opportunities, health, housing, income-generating opportunities and microcredit.

40. **The Committee recommends that the State party seek international assistance and cooperation, as appropriate, to improve infrastructure in rural areas, formulate policies to combat poverty among rural women, and ensure their access to justice, education, formal employment, skills development and training opportunities, health, housing, income-generating opportunities, microcredit and ownership and use of land, taking into account their specific needs, in line with general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women.**

Women with disabilities

41. The Committee is concerned at the lack of public policies and measures to protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities, including their rights to inclusive education, employment, health care, housing and participation in political and public life, as well as the absence of mechanisms to protect women and girls with disabilities from intersecting forms of discrimination, gender-based violence and abuse. The Committee is also concerned at the alleged practice of the forced sterilization of women recognized as legally incapable, with the sole consent of their guardian and without their free, prior and informed consent or an impartial examination by a court.

42. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Adopt comprehensive policies and programmes to protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities, in particular those facing intersecting forms of discrimination, ensuring their equal access to mainstream education, employment, housing, health-care and other basic services, as well as social

protection, and to promote their autonomy, access to community services and participation in political and public life;

(b) **Abolish the practice of the forced sterilization of women and girls with disabilities, ensure that any such interventions may only be performed with their full, free, prior and informed consent, prosecute and adequately punish medical personnel who have performed forced sterilizations on women or girls with disabilities and provide remedies, including adequate financial compensation and rehabilitation, for the victims of forced sterilization.**

Other disadvantaged groups of women

43. The Committee is concerned at the absence of anti-discrimination legislation prohibiting intersecting forms of discrimination. It is also concerned about discrimination against migrant women, women belonging to religious minority groups and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women

44. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure equal rights and opportunities for women who face intersecting forms of discrimination, in particular migrant women, women belonging to religious minority groups and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.**

Marriage and family relations

45. The Committee is concerned with regard to the following:

(a) Although the legal minimum age of marriage is 18 years for both women and men, girls who are 16 and 17 years of age can marry with the consent of their parents;

(b) Corporal punishment is a continuing practice affecting girls in the home;

(c) The lack of awareness among women that they can retain their maiden name after marriage;

(d) Reports of girls running away from home and the lack of information on the causes and the measures taken by the State party to address the problem.

46. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Enforce the strict application of the legal minimum age of marriage of 18 years and only allow exceptions for girls and boys who have reached the age of 16 years and have obtained judicial authorization;**

(b) **Take strong actions, including amending relevant legislation, to ensure the prohibition of corporal punishment in the home;**

(c) **Raise awareness among women about the possibility of retaining their maiden name after marriage;**

(d) **Address the problem of girls running away from home and undertake a study on it in order to tackle its root causes.**

Impact of climate change and natural disasters on women

47. The Committee notes with appreciation that women occupy leadership positions in the Department of Emergency Management and in district organizations in the State party. Nevertheless, it is concerned that the State party has not explicitly incorporated a gender perspective into its disaster risk reduction strategies.

48. **The Committee recommends that the State party include an explicit gender perspective in national policies and actions plans on climate change and**

disaster response and risk reduction, targeting women not only as those disproportionally affected by the effects of climate change and disasters but also as active participants in the formulation and implementation of such policies.

Data collection

49. The Committee is concerned at the general lack of updated statistical data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, disability, geographical location and socioeconomic background, which are necessary for accurately assessing the situation of women, determining whether they suffer from discrimination, informed and targeted policymaking and for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved towards the realization of women's substantive equality in all areas covered by the Convention.

50. **The Committee calls upon the State party to develop an indicator system on gender-related issues to improve the collection of data, disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors, which are necessary to assess the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes aimed at mainstreaming gender equality and enhancing the enjoyment by women of their human rights. In that regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its general recommendation No. 9 (1989) on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages the State party to seek technical assistance from the relevant United Nations agencies and to enhance its collaboration with women's associations that could assist in the collection of accurate data.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

51. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.**

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

52. **The Committee calls for the realization of substantive gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

Dissemination

53. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official language of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, Parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.**

Technical assistance

54. **The Committee recommends that the State party consider seeking international assistance and cooperation and availing itself of technical assistance in the development and implementation of a comprehensive programme aimed at implementing the above recommendations and the Convention as a whole. The Committee also calls upon the State party to continue its cooperation with specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations system.**

Ratification of other treaties

55. **The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments[1] would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; to which it is not yet a party.**

Follow-up to the concluding observations

56. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 12 (c), 14 (a) and (b) and 34 (c) above.**

Preparation of the next report

57. **The Committee invites the State party to submit its ninth periodic report, which is due in July 2021. The report should be submitted on time and, in case of delay, cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.**

58. **The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**

[1] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.